

// [Transcription of the English subtitles of the first 20 minutes of the press conference]

[Background voice] Dear colleagues, please, listen carefully. Ask your questions in the end.

Let's get it started.

[C, A, B are sitting at the table. They are prisoners of war of Ukraine. They have no handcuffs or other restraints and wear normal clothing. All are wounded, have stitches on their faces, or have bandages on their faces or hands. In front of each is a sheet of paper and a pen, and a glass of water to drink. The camera is on them, they are seated, from left to right: C – A – B. All three are not soldiers but police officers.]

// [- Names and other personal data were removed to ensure confidentiality and the right to privacy]

A [in the center, the highest rank among the three POW, about 45 yrs old]:

Dear journalists, hello, everyone. First I want to apologize for what's going on .. you know .. for the reason why we meet with you here. Out of the ordinary. Really crazy.

This is our first time on camera, our first interview. We're confused. Maybe, later you'll [journalists] give us some guiding questions. So this would look like an interview [fit into the format of an interview].

Let us introduce ourselves. All of us are police officers, law enforcers of the Russian Federation.

I represent the Rapid Deployment Task Force, I'm a [...] senior commissioner [name etc]. Here are my colleagues.

B [sitting on the right, about 35 years]: I'm an inspection officer at information and documentation group. OMON special task police squad [name etc]

C [sitting on the left, about 25 years]: Hello, I'm a brigade chief of police, OMON [name etc]

A: These papers -

[he shows his sheet of paper, one can see handwritten notes]

these are our cue card we want to tell you. This is not our text [text written for us], written in advance to be voice[d] here.

So, just to clarify [what the three of us would like to do now], we'll just tell everything one by one about what happened to us, and not only to us.

Let start ..

3:12

B: I'll start it. In February 2022, we were mobilized to undergo drills in Belarus.

February 24, 2022, we have been given an unlawful order to go to Ukraine's territory. // [underlined for clarity]

The order was conveyed by our commanders, the order came from our supreme high commander, from the president of the Russian Federation Vladimir Putin.

Together with Russia's Armed Forces, we were ordered to go to Ukraine's capital, to Kyiv and supply support [assist with] in capturing capital [capture/take control of the metropolis of Kyiv].

Well - after capturing capital [the city] we allegedly [seemingly] had to - by all means - to stop any wrongdoings [offenses] of Ukraine's civilians [and ,by all means' - I mean by that:] including arrests, physical coercion. Execution by firing squad.

C: Later we realized that preparation for war was predetermined in summer 2021. All the detachments [divisions] were mobilized to undergo exercises: OMON Special Task Police Squad, SOBR Rapid Deployment Task Force, and armed forces, including forces from Chechnya and Dagestan.

A: Here's [So, that is] the overall picture. Should you have any questions - please do not hesitate to ask us.

5:38

Interviewer: You told [said] that the order was 'unlawful'. Why haven't you refused to carry out the order?

A: May I? // [he waits for B or C, then he answers]

Police officers cannot perform any orders in the territory of a foreign state. We didn't really understand [comprehend], maybe .. Yes, we did not really believe that we would really enter Ukraine's territory. We were told that we'd have joint drills in Belarus. That's it.

As soon as we were told [that] we were going to Ukraine, all the vehicles were ready. We were read the order [the order was read to us] just before departure. We had no time to analyze [think about] it. We were just told: troopers, mount up and go! And we went!

This is how it looked.

C: We crossed the border and were near Prybiat River. We had no [military-] mission task.

A: They [assumption: those who gave the order] should explain us something during the drive or at stops in-between.

B: Yes the thing was, allegedly [seemingly] our drills consisted of numerous relocations, marches. I mean, air passage from our part of Russia to Moscow. March from Moscow to the nearest settlements. Or march from Moscow to Belarus.

During all days of the drills we were on the road all the time. We slept in the vehicles, in KamAZ truckloads. We were driving for long and long hours. We were [got] used to it.

When we were loaded to the vehicles [When we were told get in the car] and told, hey, we're going on now, move on .. We got into the car and went on.

It [assumption: the movement into the territory of Ukraine] was just like an ordinary relocation [just another relocation] for us.

7:58

Interviewer: Some Russian captives told that they had to 'rescue' Ukraine from something. That people would welcome you here. Were you also told this?

A: Yes. We were told that Ukraine allegedly [seemingly] – [and] we were told this [already] while being in Russia, via media - that Ukraine is dominated;

literally [I repeat verbatim, and], I'm 100% wrong now, don't judge too harshly - that

[stands up in his chair, sits down again]

Ukraine's territory is dominated by fascists' regime. Nationalists, nazis have seized power. [That the] ordinary people [there] need some help to get rid of this 'joke' [absurd idea]. This was the aim. Obviously, this information was unilateral [subjective, wrong] information.

Of course, we have internet. Sometimes we get something from some other sources .. We could do a little analysis [could have reflected upon the situation], but we had some doubts [we doubted it]. We didn't know the situation for sure [We did not know the situation exactly].

I personally .. just when we entered this territory, when I watched the address [speech] of the professional boxers - your boxers - back home I always loved watching them, Usyk and Lomachenko, they are my favorite. I mean that when I say it.

These people are just ready to take [up] arms. They told [said]: "We didn't call you here". and I feel shame that we came to this country, to this territory, Ukraine's territory. This woman is just standing and crying. I feel shame.

I don't know, why we were doing it. We knew very little. We were too little in our thoughts [we questioned too little].

10:01

We brought sorrow to this land. [We] don't know - how many [much] time is needed to purge [expurgate] everything.

Is this redemption possible?

We [we three POWs] will go to jail or whatever we deserve .. We're ready for everything.

But .. will it mean a redemption?

I feel sorry for [the] people left in Russia, they are not guilty. Their guilt is that they are misinformed. Some do not even have internet. They have no chance to use something alternative.

They are constantly brain-washed. They get [receive] this unilateral [wrong] information, that Ukraine is seized by fascists, etc.

Maybe I really deserved to learn this lesson. Oh Lord; - so I could finally see [it, myself] and try to tell it to those, who are in Russia. Maybe, they do not really realize, what's going on here.

11:15

I'm frank with you.

For those who would [will] watch this video: you might think about me whatever you want

[he stands up and sits down again]

That I was forced, intimidated or the text was prepared in advance, whatever, I'll give it to you straight

[he heaves a sigh]

If somebody came to my territory, I would do the same [like] this people did. And I would be right!

And they are right now.

While I have to sit here and offer excuses! I do not understand, what am I offering these excuses for.

My grandpa fought! [While] I am here like a death-squads' member. This is my personal feeling concerning [how I feel about the] Russian armed forces.

If they can hear me.

12:03

Guys ..

[he heaves a sigh]

Be brave!

It's easier for me, I'm in this situation already.

[he moves in his chair]

You are in a tense situation, going against your own commander.

But this is genocide.

The people are just killed.

Ukrainian people and we, as Russians, get our. . for invading [a] foreign country.

This is right. From the one hand, this is not right, from the other, this is right. From Ukraine's side this is right, from Russia's side, that's wrong.

12:47

Russia cannot win here anyway. All the variants [factors] are obvious [show it clearly].

Even if we go till the very end - I hope this will never happen though - we can invade the territory but we cannot invade the people. We would not be able to keep this territory.

And total emptiness would be around us. We would live like on the island. No one would talk to us.

And this would [only] be fair! [A] Russian would be ashamed to confess that he's [a] Russian! We would always get thump on the head. for the deeds we do now.

13:26

I'm begging you, stop until it's too late. Give us a chance to come back home.

Make a right choice, go back home. People start rallying there. They begin to realize something. not too much but still.

Our task is to avoid total destruction of these two nations.

This is terrible. I've never seen anything before [I've seen nothing comparable]. Never thought that at the end of my life I would face something like that! This opportunity [occasion], I do not need it. My mom does not need it! I can only imagine her emotional state ..

[he heaves a sigh]

14:16

I'd like to add something.

I cannot find the words to say sorry to Ukrainian people.

If you find enough, find the strength to move past [overcome] the memory.

If no ..

[he raises the hands]

we [Russians] will understand you.

[he heaves a sigh]

14:39

We will not succeed without your help here. What do I mean? [What/whom do I talk about?]

People in [the] Russian army and in Federal National Guard Troops Service, [who] located [came to] here [, to Ukraine]. Many of them are just embarrassed [ashamed]. They do not want war! They do not want to kill you, Ukrainians. Trust me.

It might sound weird. - People with weapons came to your land - do not mean [intend] to kill you.

But I 100% assure you, ask anyone, no one wants to kill. I'm not talking about the captives [POWs like us]. Just go to Russia and ask:

[raises the hand]

Do you need Ukrainian's blood?

I'm sure that only an idiot would say 'yes'. Or not even Ukrainian - a blood of some other man! This is just a disease, this is called cannibalism

so

15:29

[he heaves a sigh]

Help us [to] deal with this problem, we have a real problem.

We won't be able to stop right now, the flywheel has already started [things were just set in motion].

Therefore, with your [Ukraine's] help, to those [Russians] who surrender as prisoners, pluck up your courage!

Save their health and life.

What is it for?

Because if you make efforts to ensure that the maximum number of them die, no one will come to our homeland [Russia]. And no one [is able to] tell about what happened here [in Ukraine]. It's easier to kill than to give birth to someone.

Even if a third of those, who come back, will be able to tell about it correctly [to report on it properly], this will already be a big benefit.

And thanks to you this will happen. And thanks to your country.

You will become winners not only physically, but also spiritually. [You will win the victory, not only on a physical but also on a spiritual level.]

It is very important. you just knock [throw] everyone to the ground. [You win across the board.]

I just sincerely hope for your mercy towards those [our Russian] people, who will come out to you with their hands up or those [who will be taken captive] wounded

We should not sow death. It's better to sow life. And now you have a great opportunity to do so.

That's all.

[raises the hands]

16:56

B: I wanted to add that, when we were taken prisoner we were taken to the hospital and given medical treatment. All of us were wounded, and we were treated.

Just [please] listen to this situation [these facts]: they say [one says] that allegedly [so called] high-precision weapons destroy only military units somewhere [else].

This is all false. I heard air raid sirens all the night. I went to bed [I went to sleep] and prayed that the shell just didn't targeted me.

People here are just like us. They all want to stay alive - mothers, children. I would like air strikes to be stopped.

// [----- 18th minute -----]

18:02

Interviewer: You said that you were ordered to come to Kyiv and cooperate with the armed forces of the Russian Federation. What specific tasks you had to perform?

[The three POWs are moving a little, silently considering who will explain best:]

B: You know, [we are] speaking [talking] about the police units. Blowing up something is not our profile [not what we do].

The armed forces, for example, had to seize the territory. Our task was to stop the riots. We had to assure [secure] a team site [the terrain] to prevent people from stopping us .. something like that

18:58

Interviewer: You talked about getting home some day. Do you have a chance to return home under Russia's current government?

[camera pans towards C, who looks thoughtful. Then back to B, who is answering.]

B: I doubt it. There is a hope, no one knows the future

// [a break here. The question or discussion guiding to the following was not recorded]

19:18

B: We drove in a column by our vehicles. We had no armor. We were told that we were heading to Kyiv. Our commander's vision was blurred .. We were captivated [been taken captive].

I cannot tell well [where] exactly. Maybe somewhere near Kyiv.

19:49

Interviewer: So you were captivated [been taken captive] by Ukraine's armed forces?

// [pls note: it was less of "taking captives" but rather to collect wounded men from the grounds]

B: They [assumed: people of Ukraine's armed forces] asked - how are you, are you OK? Who are you? I explained who I am;

They asked whether I you honestly say about this situation [whether I told them the truth].

I said yes.

They took me away then. They gave me hot tea, no one hurt me.

20:19

Interviewer: How did you manage to call your relatives?

B: We arrived in Belarus without cellphones. We had no phones or contacts, just nothing. Here [in Ukraine] we tried to remember the phone numbers.

Ukrainians told us: if you want to call our [your] relatives, here you have a phone.

// [the video continues a few seconds, no subtitles were given.]

To those who read this document:

That is a (slightly (spell) corrected) transcription of the English subtitles of the first 20 minutes of the press conference, the interview with the three gentlemen Russian POWs.

[assumed clarifications were given, but marked to avoid misrepresentations]

Names and other personal data have been removed to ensure confidentiality and the right to privacy for individuals.

Video e.g. here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oS8ktqe5LEY>

English subtitles are given here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LD_4Y2TQotA,

by Ostap Kostyuk, filmmaker